

***Ribes cereum* (Dougl) var. *colubrinum* (Hitcch)**
wax currant
Grossulariaceae (Currant Family)

Status: State Endangered

Rank: G5T3S1

General Description: A many-branched, spreading to erect unarmed shrub 1½ to 5 feet (½ to 2½ m) tall. The new branches are finely pubescent and turn grayish-brown or reddish-brown. The leaves can range from kidney-shaped to fan-shaped. They are mostly without hairs on the leaves or sepals that surround the petals. Leaves measure ½ to 1 in. (1½ to 3 cm) broad and are shallowly lobed. The flowers are in a head-shaped cluster at the end of peduncles. The entire inflorescence has fine hair and can be sticky. *R. cereum* var. *colubrinum* has a cylindrical hypanthium that is twice as long as the sepals with a greenish-white or pink tinge. The inflorescence bracts are ovate to obovate and usually pointed. The unpalatable fruit is ovoid, lacking hairs and ranges from dull to bright red in color.

Identification Tips: Compared with *R. cereum* var. *cereum*, *R. cereum* var. *colubrinum* has very little hair on its leaves and sepals. A technical key must be used for positive identification.

Phenology: Flowers from April through June.

Range: This regional endemic is confined to the Snake River Canyon and its tributaries in western central Idaho and Wallowa County, Oregon. In Washington, the variety occurs in Asotin County.

Habitat: This variety is found only in the canyons of the Snake River drainage. It can occur on dry, rocky slopes or along streams. Associates include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoregneria spicata*) and bluegrass (*Poa* spp.). It generally grows in and above tall shrub communities around 3000 ft (1000 m). Associates in Washington populations include mock-orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), varied-leaf phacelia (*Phacelia heterophylla*), and Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*).

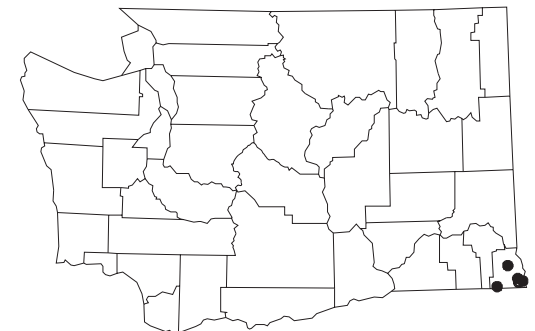
Ecology: The variation among the varieties of *R. cereum* appears to be highly dependent on local conditions of exposure, moisture, and soil. This is a geographic variety in that it grows intergradiently with var. *cereum* and possibly var. *inebrians*.

Ribes cereum* var. *colubrinum
wax currant



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Known distribution of
Ribes cereum
var. *colubrinum*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

Ribes cereum* var. *colubrinum

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Photo by Barb Benner



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State Status Comments: The variety is known from four confirmed populations and one historical sighting. All four sites are on private land that is under threat of development and agriculture. Registry would be helpful.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory needed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Road construction, agriculture, and herbicides are the greatest threats to the species.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 614 pp.

Washington Natural Heritage Program. 1981. *An Illustrated Guide to the Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Vascular Plants of Washington*. Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 328 pp.